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LOS ANGELES

GIFT OF

DR. AND MRS. ELMER BELT

FLORENCE
NIGHTINGALE;

OR,

THE ANGEL OF CHARITY.

A. B. C.

BROOKLYN.

MDCCCLVII.



Florence Nightingale;

OR,

THE ANGEL OF CHARITY.



THE evening hour had stolen o'er the earth,

Nature's sweet time of holy, calm repose.

Night's mystic wand, with soft, mysterious

charm,

Had touched the land, shrouding in sombre

hue

A city fair, whose thousand homes had

glowed

With all the gorgeous tints of sunset light,
Such light as only bathes the hallowed soil
Of Italy.

The quivering moonlight crept
O'er dome and cloistered cell, illumining
The gray cathedral walls ; sending to rest,
In sheltered nooks, the shadows dim and
strange
Which haunt the classic piles that tower
high
Above the sleeping city's silent gloom,
And flecking with a liquid, silver sheen,

The crested waves that dimpled Arno's
tide.

Shades of the illustrious dead seemed
hovering round

Their cherished earthly home, in converse
sweet,—

'Mid spots that earth deems consecrated
ground,—

With spirits that still shed abroad their
love

And poesy. That night, round Florence's
walls,

A halo of enchantment lingered long.
Within its precincts fair, still fresh and
 bright
With glory of departed centuries,
A little light first quickened into life,—
A light destined to shed a radiance pure
O'er one dark page in earth's sad history.
And came there not upon the still night-
 breeze,
A floating strain of harmony divine,
A fragment of an anthem angels sing
Hailing the advent of a spirit here,
Whose mission is of holy love and peace?

Sure blessed was that night with Heaven's
own smile,
That claimed the birth of Florence Night-
ingale,
And one more leaf of fresh, undying hue,
Her name has added to the laurel wreath
That crowns thy brow, O Italy !

The scene
Is changed. No more the light of South-
ern skies
Enriched by added lustre from the Past,
Smiles down upon the new-awakened life,

But England rocks the fair child on her
breast,

And cradles it within her own sweet home.

Far from the noisy city's din and strife,

Nurtured with love in Nature's verdant lap,

Whose great heart's measured beatings
she could hear,

And note the rapid pulse of throbbing life,

Her childhood passed,—fresh, innocent and
gay.

Yet, with a mind and soul of riper years,

Unsoiled, unstained by contact with the
world,

Her heart with all its fresh, warm sympathy,

Soon oped at sight of human grief and woe.

The fragrant breath of Spring, the joyous song

Of warblers wild, the golden harvest-fruit,
And rippling music of the stream,—all spoke

To her of the great Father's boundless love,

And prompted an impulsive wish, a strong
And earnest hope, to add her little mite
To the swift tide of pitying, active love,

And shed in darkened homes the radiant
light
Of "heaven-born Charity."

Oft, hand in hand
With childhood's cherished love,—a sister
dear,
She trod with printless feet the grass-
grown path
That led to the drear, sorrowful abode
Of Poverty. A basket, choicely stored
With food, a home of luxury supplied ;

Some little comfort for the invalid ;
A passage from the Holy Book of Life,
Read by a voice so full of melody,—
Seemed to those weary, grief-worn, toil-
 tried hearts,
Like rain upon the parched and thirsty
 land ;
As dew within the drooping lily-cup,
Drew yet a breath of sweetness and per-
 fume
From faded, withered lives.

Time urges on

His eager, pauseless course. The young,
frail girl

Has ripened into thoughtful womanhood.

Not what, perchance, the world deems
beautiful,

But fair and bright with loveliness of soul,
That beams from brow and eye, speaks in
the tones

Of a soft voice, and circles word and deed

With grace and sweet humility. Feeling

That life is given for action not for rest,

For the fulfilment of some noble aim,

She pauses not along its flower-strewn
path

To sip its honied sweets, but, pressing on,
Points others on the heavenward course;
 urges

With gentle, yet resistless power, to try
The safe, though steep ascent of that great
 Hill

Whose summit is illumed by Learning's
 light;

And lifts with tender hand the weary ones
Who sink beneath life's weighty load.

 Thus days
And weeks glide by, each bearing on its wing
The record of some good and holy deed,
To cheer and elevate mankind.

But hark !

What threatening tones sound on the quiet
air ?

The trumpet-blast of War, re-echoing
shrill,

Calls England's braves to meet the coming
storm.

O'erhanging clouds of thick, portentous
gloom,

With thunder muttering from their murky
depths,

Obscure the calm and sunny light of Peace.
From cheerful, happy homes, throughout
the land,

Goes up a wail of sorrow and of woe.
Britannia's noblest sons, the joy and pride
Of household bands, with dauntless front
 go forth,
To battle for disputed rights, and win
The empty bubble of chivalric fame.
Over Crimean fields, War's demons dark
With blackened brow prevail. Defiance
 fierce
From out the hostile tented-camps is
 hurled,
And Europe's challenged hosts at last are
 closed
In fearful strife.

From Balaklava's plain,
Deep-dyed and crimsoned o'er with pre-
cious blood,
Come tidings sore to anxious, beating hearts
On English soil. The air resounds with
moans
And plaintive cries. A thousand joyous
homes
Are lone and desolate. A mother here,
Heart-broken, longs but once again to press
Her darling to her breast; a loving wife
To gaze upon the dying one, to her
Dearer than all, than life itself.

Meanwhile,
Disease and death and wretchedness are rife
Throughout the seat of war. No gentle
hand
Is there to cool the fevered, throbbing
brow
That finds no rest from agonizing pain,
No voice to whisper words of holy peace
To the departing soul.

But one brave heart,
One noble, sympathizing breast, is warm
With angel-love. To Florence Nightingale

The supplicating cry of pain and woe
Hath not been raised in vain. The hour
is come,

The moment for heroic enterprise,
And sacrifice of self, perchance of life.
She feels her country's need. She hears
the voice

Within, that bids her soul be true, be
strong.

She heeds not pleasure's call or the appeal
Of enervating ease and luxury,
Or warning tones, that tell of danger, want
And care, but, buckling on her heavenly
shield,

Goes forth in trustful, humble confidence,
Her woman's weakness rendered strong by
power
Of earnest faith and love.

With holiness
And purity enthroned upon her brow,
And goodness shrined within her noble
heart,
She speeds upon the wings of Charity,
A messenger of light, and joy, and peace
To suffering humanity. And soon
The precious freight on ocean's heaving
breast

Is borne,—whose ceaseless, surging ebb
and flow

Seem beating time for all eternity,—
And light at length illuminates the gloom
That spread its heavy pall of misery
Around the suffering host at Scutari.

A thrill of joy is felt throughout the camp,
And grateful hearts send up their prayer-
ful praise,

And blessings spring along the path of her
Who, like an angel strayed from heaven
above

With magic power sheds gladness over
all.

Where wretchedness and strife triumphant
 reigned,
A hallowed peace is soft diffused. With
 hand
And heart unwearied, she supplies the
 wants
Of needy, wounded ones,—dark hours to
 cheer,
And soothe with thoughts of home the
 invalid,
Her never-tiring care.

A sufferer here
Upon his lonely pallet lies. His brow

With heat and pain throbs fast, and rest-
lessly

His weary limbs toss on the sleepless couch.

A dream of home steals o'er his fevered
brain,

And eagerly the sick one's arms are
stretched

To clasp the dear one to his yearning
breast.

The fair, young wife is there, whose pres-
ence bright

Had filled his heart with sacred joy. Alas!

The vision fades, and tears, dew-drops of
woe,

Fill the dim eyes. But, hush! Is it a
dream?

A gentle step falls light upon his ear,
Cool hands are pressed upon the burning
head,

And grateful moisture greets his parching
lips,

A kind, sweet face bends over him in love,
And calms his aching heart with words of
peace.

Another there is draining the last drop
In life's deep cup of mingled joy and grief.
Slowly the sunset light fades in the west.

Slowly life's light is quenched in the dark
eye,

And shades of death enshroud the weary
sight.

The future is a dark, veiled mystery.

"Oh! for one gleam of faith and hope!"
he cries.

As with a soft, celestial beauty clad,

The same fair face bends o'er the penitent.

His eager ear catches the whispered words

That tell of Him who died to save. A
smile

Of heavenly peace plays round the parted
lips,—

The spirit goes to seek its home on
high.

She passes on, and oft a silent prayer
Calls down God's love upon her noble head,
And simple hearts in reverent gratitude
Caress her waving shadow as it falls
Upon their lowly beds.

Oh ! who can tell
The beauty, aye, e'en the sublimity,
Of such a spirit of devotedness,
And sacrifice of self, or estimate

The power of such a life of earnest love?
There is true poetry in noble souls,
There is a music in a holy deed,
That, wafted up and on through endless
 space,
Mingles at last with seraph minstrelsy.

And now the war ended, the battle done,
Peace waves again her white wings o'er the
 land.

England may not have won from history
A crown of fame; from records truer far
And nobler,—human hearts, she hath re-
 ceived

A glory that shall never die, so long
As eyes shall brighten at the sight of acts
Of true benevolence, or life-blood thrill
As evidence of that good faith in man,
That near approach to the divinity,—
The workings of that strange, mysterious
 love,
That is all-powerful ; that never fails ;
That bears, believes, hopes and endures.

 The name
Of Florence Nightingale shall prove a spell
Of magic influence,—a quickening charm

To move men's souls to high and lofty
aims ;

Shall touch the sacred spring of good with-
in ;

Shall animate to gen'rous sacrifice,
And sound to hearts and homes with the
sweet tone

Of some familiar household word.

Woman !

The bright example of her noble life,
Appeals to thee with earnest, thrilling
power.

Thou hast the faith, thou hast the holy
love.

Oh ! dream not an existence here away
In dim, illusive hope of unearned joy,
Mere yearnings after ideal excellence.
Deem not thou art too feeble now, since
one,
In form as frail as thine, has proved her
strength.

Think not a battle-field alone the scene
That waits thy sympathy, thy guardian
care ;

For life is one extended battle-strife,
And heroes truer far than ever won

A victory o'er foes on tented field,
Are struggling on in silent conflict now,
With all the ills of pain and poverty.
Be faithful, true to thy high destiny.
Go forth like her whose magic light has
 shed
A flood of radiance o'er the earth, and
 heal
The wounded heart, make bright the dar-
 kened home,
And wake soft strains of touching melody
In souls else tuneless, broken notes of want
And misery.

And Florence Nightingale !
Thou harbinger of good to suffering man,
Thou gentle type of that deep faith and
 love,
That is man's sacred, heavenly heritage,—
His glorious spirit of humanity,—
Earth's brightest honors cluster round thy
 name,
Happy in sense of duty nobly done,
Rich in a nation's love and reverence,
May Heaven's choice blessings rest upon
 thy head.

Henceforth and forever thy fair name shall
be

Earth's Angel of Holiness, bright Charity.
Of all England's warblers, the sweetest and
best,

Thy carol of love shall forever be blest,
And songs of thy life from the music of
Time,

Awaken responsive an echo sublime.



